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ABSTRACT

This is a report on a child's English and French speech before, during and after a summer vacation in France. The findings are based on recorded samples of her speech in both languages elicited at three times: (1) immediately preceding the trip at age 3 years, 8 months; (2) 2 and 1/2 months later; and (3) again 2 and 1/2 months after her return to the United States. Three types of speech were elicited: vocabulary, structured narrative and free conversation. Before the vacation the child was English dominant; during it, her pronunication became perfectly French but her vocabulary and syntax included a good deal of interference from English. Two and one half months after her return, English was again dominant, but French was still active and much better than before the trip. The taping sessions yielded data on vocabulary production that fall into five major categories: (1) bilingual maintenance; (2) patterns of forgetting; (3) patterns of learning; (4) indications of English dominance; and (5) absent lexical items at all stages in both languages. A summary of the child's narrative and conversation skills in the 3 stages, and samples of English interference in French at the end of stage 2 are provided. The overall picture is one of progress regarding the child's bilingualism. (AMH)

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THE EFFECTS OF A SUMMERTIME FRENCH IMMERSION EXPERIENCE ON THE ENGLISH AND FRENCH SPEECH OF A BILINGUAL CHILD*

Marianne Celce-Murcia

I. Introduction

Caroline, the child being studied is my daughter. Prior to her 2 1/2-month summer vacation in France, she had been acquiring English and French simultaneously, with English being the dominant language. Her father is a native speaker of French whereas I am a native speaker of English. She is an only child. An earlier study of Caroline's English and French language development is reported in Celce-Murcia (1977) and Celce-Murcia (forthcoming).

Samples of English and French speech were elicited and recorded at three different times:

Stage I: immediately preceding the trip to France at the end of June, 1976; age 3.8.
Stage II: at the end of a 2 1/2-month stay in France in mid September, 1976; age 3.10 1/2.
Stage III: after 2 1/2 months back in the U.S. at the end of November, 1976; age 4.1.

Three types of speech data were elicited:

1. Vocabulary - from an illustrated ABC book with 26 pictures, one for each letter of the alphabet
2. Structured narrative - cued by using a picture book illustrating the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, a story Caroline is passively familiar with in both languages.
3. Free Conversation - whatever Caroline was ready to talk about at the time.

II. General Development

1. Caroline was dominant in English before the vacation. She had a good passive understanding of French, and a certain amount of active French vocabulary. She went to France with her father in late June. I joined them 1 1/2 months later because I had to stay behind and coordinate a summer program for UCLA.

2. Her father and grandmother report that once totally immersed in French, Caroline did not speak much for one month. She observed, responded in monosyllables and then suddenly began to speak French with a lot of English vocabulary and syntax mixed in. By the time I arrived, her pronunciation had become perfectly French (based on the judgment of at least a dozen French monolingual adults). (This was often a source

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of my getting teased. Everyone asked me why I couldn't pronounce French as well as my young daughter!) Another observation I made upon my arrival was that Caroline either could or would no longer speak English although she could still understand it. (This phenomenon was also true of Leopold's daughter, Hildegard.) Caroline had a little bit of contact with peers and with children older than herself during her vacation but was mainly with adults (grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbors, and even a great grandmother).

3. Upon return to the U.S. Caroline re-entered her English-language nursery school and continued to speak French for one month even though no one at school could understand her. It seemed to be enough that she could understand them.

4. After 2 1/2 months back in the U.S. English was once again dominant but French was much better, more active than before.

III. Vocabulary - The 26 pictures in the ABC book were supposed to elicit the following words:

Letter	English Word	French Word
A	an apple	une pomme
B	ballons	les ballons
C	(alarm) clock	le revéille
D	a doll	une poupée
E	eggs	les oeufs
F	flowers	les fleurs
G	a guitar	la guitare
H	a house	une maison
I	an insect (bug)	le cafard
J	a jar	une jarre
K	keys	les clefs
L	a lion	un lion
M	mittens	les mitaines, les gants
N	a newspaper	le journal
O	an owl	un hibou
P	paint	la peinture
Q	a quilt, blanket	une couverture
R	a rabbit, bunny	un lapin
S	shoes	les souliers
T	a telephone	le telephone
U	an umbrella	la parapluie

V	a vase	une vase
W	a window	une fenêtre
X	a xylophone	le xylophone
Y	yarn	un fil
Z	a zipper	une fermeture éclair

The taping sessions gave us data on vocabulary production that fall into five major categories.

1. Bilingual Maintenance (English/French distinction at all 3 stages)

   apple/une pomme; ball/le ballon; dolly/poupee; guitar/la guitare; house/une maison; ladybug/une coccinelle; telephone/(*la) telephone (correct article is le).

2. Patterns of Forgetting (the word is missing if the language is not dominant or present in Caroline's environment)

   a. English, Stage I; French, Stage II; English, Stage III.

      - flowers - les fleurs - flowers
      - a marble - une jarre - a marble (stimulus is a jar with a marble in it)
      - lion - une lionne - lion (gender switch)
      - a vase - *(une verre)-a vase (verre means 'glass' not 'vase' in French)

   b. Both languages, Stages I and III; French, Stage II

      - keys - les clefs

   Note: for other information on 'forgetting' that focuses on English-speaking children in Spanish and French immersion situations respectively see Cohen (1975) and Ervin-Tripp (1973).

3. Patterns of Learning: (Progress toward bilingualism)

   a. English, Stage I; French, Stage II; Both Languages, Stage III

      - window/les fenêtres
      - egg/les oeufs
      - paint/la peinture
      - shoes/les souliers

   b. English, Stage I; Both Languages, Stages II and III

      - newspaper/journal
      - bird, owl/oiseau (stimulus is an owl)
      - rabbit, bunny/lapin

   c. Neither language at Stage I; French, Stage II; Both Languages, Stage III

      - blanket/couverture

   d. English at Stages I and II; Both Languages, Stage III

      - umbrella/parapluie (Stage I - umbulella)

I should like to digress here and note that rabbit/lapin (3b) really should have been in Category 1 -- "bilingual maintenance" but for some reason Caroline didn't produce lapin during the first taping. (She had a pet rabbit at the time and was well acquainted with both the English and the French word for identifying the rabbit.) This underscores the dilemma we face when we are working exclusively with performance data, i.e. we are at the mercy of the subject's lapses, whims, and perhaps occasional deliberate non-cooperation. I still feel these categories exhibit valid tendencies, but the assignment of a given item to a given category is at times questionable, and we should be aware of this problem continually and not treat the data as if they were the only and final truth.

4. Indications of English Dominance

a. English word persists at all 3 stages

·clock (stage II (E) elicited une clock)
·zipper (stage II (F), French accent)

b. Neither language at Stages I and II; English only at Stage III

·mittens

Note that none of the 26 items shows a French form persisting at all three stages.

5. Absent Lexical Items at all Stages in both languages

·xylophone
(volunteered 'telephone' at Stage II (for E and F))
(volunteered '*techopone' and 'leckophone' (for E) and '*monphone' (for F) at Stage III.)

·yarn
(volunteered 'jar' (E) at Stage II)

IV Summary of Narrative and Conversational Skills

		Stage I (3.8)	Stage II (3.10 1/2	Stage III (4.1)
NARRATIVE 'Goldilocks and the 3 bears'	ENGLISH	Caroline is weak. A great deal of prompting is needed to elicit a few words and phrases She often digresses.	Caroline is poor in this area. Although she was prompted and cued in English, she used mostly French. The only exchange in English was: M: What did baby bear forget to do? C: Close the door. She often said: "je connais pas" (i.e. I don't know.)	Caroline does fairly well. With the pictures and some prompting, she can tell the story. No French was used. She got a bit tired and bored toward the end of the story.

	FRENCH	Caroline's narrative is virtually nil. Even though cued and questioned in French, she used only one French word chapeau 'hat.'	Cued in French, Caroline answers mainly with short phrases using a minimum of English. However, one English word, because, does persist.	Caroline's French narrative skill is fair. She said quite a lot about the story in French. She tended to use English at first on most responses, but when pressed, she could often produce the French.
FREE CONVERSATION	ENGLISH	Good. (No French is used in response to English cues.)	Very poor. She responds in French. What English occurs is used inadvertently and with a French accent. She no longer can (or refuses to) converse in English.	Good. She talked 15 minutes with native English competence but did use 3 French expressions! 'gentille' (nice) 'I am more fatiguée' (tired) 'I have mal au ventre' (a stomach ache)
	FRENCH	Weak. She understands French but answers using English most of the time.	Not bad. Her accent is definitely French. In some respects she is like a French child one year or so younger. In other areas English words and structures persist. Some English words mispronounced as if they were French are: bird zipper paint newspaper	She understands well and can respond fairly well. She has to be reminded frequently to speak French since English tends to come out first.

V. Samples of English Inference in Caroline's Seemingly Fluent French (end of Stage II)

Caroline's French syntax at Stage II bears no resemblance whatsoever to her developmental English syntax at age 2.4 (see Celce-Murcia, in press). She does, however, exhibit two developmental French errors: overgeneralization of one of the two genders -- in her case, the feminine gender -- and use of the 'de' possessive construction with pronominal objects instead of the appropriate pre-nominal possessive adjective (see (b1) below).

There were four tendencies that Caroline had with regard to using English words and constructions that bear some strong resemblances to errors noted in Leopold's study of his daughter Hildegard at the age of 5.1 to 5.3.

a. Subject pronouns tend to remain English (see the samples below in (b), (c), and (d) also):

1. I mangé du poisson. (I ate some fish.)

b. Verbs and verb auxiliaries tend to remain English
1. Non. You are gonna put les zoris de toi.
(No, you're gonna put on your zoris.)
2. I'm gonna appelle la police.
(I'm gonna call the police.)
3. I'm gonna get un petit couteau.
(I'm gonna get a little knife.)
4. I'm gonna raconte toi une histoire.
(I'm gonna tell you a story.)
5. I wanna jouer avec toi.
(I wanna play with you.)

c. Logical connectives (i.e. then & because) consistently remained English.
1. because he tapé la police sur la tête.
(because he hit the policeman on the head.)
2. because he va manger l'ogre.
(because he's gonna eat the ogre.)
3. then la police vient; then he . . .
(French)
(then the policeman comes; then he . . .)

d. Interference of an English construction
1. I am fatiguée (I am tired) French also uses Be (etre)
2. I am faim. (I am hungry) > French uses HAVE (avoir)
3. I am soif. (I am thirsty)

It has been suggested that the above samples are examples of code-switching. I do not believe this to be the case since it would have been impossible for Caroline to begin the sentences in French and end them in English. Also, the above data probably make Caroline's French look too fractured. She communicated fairly well with monolingual French speakers, who universally praised her perfect accent (For other examples of phonological acquisition of French by native English speakers see Ervin-Tripp (1973)).

When adults had minor difficulties comprehending Caroline, most of them would reconstruct, i.e. they would restate what they had understood her to mean and then ask her if that was what she had wanted to say. She learned a lot of French idioms and used them quite appropriately, producing them perfectly. (Perhaps these are pre-fabs or unanalyzed chunks):

E.G. Bon dieu, va. Il est fou! "By God, he's crazy!"
(a careless driver almost ran his car into us)

Mauvaise tête, Memée. "Bad memory, grandma"
(her grandmother had forgotten something for the picnic)

VI. Concluding Remarks

Caroline's dominant learning/communication strategy seems to be a relexification process--giving priority to mastery of nouns especially and also adjectives. (Some verbs and prepositions learned too.)

Something worth mentioning is development of an inter-language form /por/ that Caroline substitutes for both English for and French pour. The problem is not phonological since she can say the English number four and French poupée (doll) perfectly. Let me add that she has had no contact with Spanish speakers. To this day she is still saying this. This example has counterparts elsewhere, too. See Young (1974), who reports on a five-year-old Spanish speaker blending la and the into /lə/ where there was no exposure to French. The overall picture is one of progress regarding Caroline's bilingualism. More French immersion is needed since English is dominant and French may be forgotten except at the level of passive understanding if it is not necessary for Caroline to use French actively from time to time.

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Postscript: After having completed this written version of my paper, I was reminded by Roger Anderson of another case study dealing with a native English-speaking child learning French by immersion (in France):

Valette, R. M. (1964), "Some Reflections on Second-Language Learning in Young Children," Language Learning, Vol. XIV, Numbers 3 and 4, pp. 91-98.

Valette's study of her son, Jean-Michel--age range 3.3 to 4.0--contrasts with my studies of Caroline in a number of respects. (e.g. his lack of prior experience with French, his daily contact with French-speaking peers, his rather quiet introspective personality, the length of his French immersion experience, and his difficulties in acquiring an authentic French accent.) For those interested in such studies, however, the differences may be as interesting as the similarities. Leopold's daughter Hildegard definitely provides a more highly similar case study.